



North/ West Lower Michigan Synod

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Signs of the Spirit: Synod Assembly 2018

I chose the theme "Signs of the Spirit" for our 2018 Synod Assembly because I am struck that we have turned the page from Acts, Chapter 1 to Acts, Chapter 2. In Acts 1, the apostles and believers wait in Jerusalem, as Jesus told them to, "for the promise of the Father." They select someone to replace Judas and restore the apostolic number to twelve. Are they trying to get back to "normal"? So too we as a synod waited for God's promise and, perhaps, we waited for things to return to "normal."

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit comes to the church in the rush of violent wind, divided tongues of fire, and speaking in other languages. Standing with the eleven and speaking for the church, Peter declares, "This is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young ones shall see visions, and your old ones shall dream dreams'" (Acts 2:16, 17). Then Peter speaks to the gathered crowd of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as good news.

I love Peter's choice of a sermon text—Joel 2:28. Following Peter's lead, I declare: **God is pouring out the Holy Spirit upon this synod, its congregations, lay leaders, and rostered ministers, and all God's people who bear the name and the cross of Christ.** Everywhere I go in the Mitten, I see signs of the Spirit. Everywhere I go, you point out signs of the Spirit. Not in rushing wind, or tongues of fire, or speaking in other languages but in all the ways you serve in Christ's name to make people's everyday lives better. I watched soldiers feast on your cookies. I see signs of the Spirit in your generosity in almsgiving as a sign that you trust and proclaim our God of abundance. One month, I signed a check for \$17,000 for hunger. I see signs of the Spirit in congregations taking risks, as the apostles did, to share the story of Jesus with people who do not know it or have been told the story of Jesus in a way that leaves out God's grace. If you want to see signs of the

Spirit, find out what's happening in boxing rings, on bus rides, and at picnic tables with freezer pops. I see signs of the Spirit at Stony Lake when young people break racial barriers. I see signs of the Spirit on the faces of pilgrims in Wittenberg and the Vatican and in places like the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Grand Rapids and St. Paul's Lutheran in Alpena as Lutherans and Roman Catholics begin to heal wounds in the body of Christ.

But I see signs of the Spirit most vividly as Joel's prophecy is fulfilled in our synod. Our sons and our daughters are prophesying about what the gospel means for our church and our state, our nation, and our world. And, while we all have moments when we long for the church's "good old days" and grieve the loss of the way the church used to be, while some continue to wait for some sort of restoration, our young ones see visions and our old ones dream dreams of what our congregations, synod, and church is becoming and can be for the sake of the gospel and the life of the world. In the words of the hymn,

You call from tomorrow, You break ancient schemes,
From the bondage of sorrow The captives dream dreams;
Our women see visions, Our men clear their eyes.
With bold new decisions Your people arise. (ELW #396)

I pray that something at our assembly—Bishop Eaton's presence, an idea on a poster that you decide to try, a conversation with an old or a new friend, the sound of us all singing together, something—strikes you as a sign of the Spirit and you come away convinced that God is keeping God's promise: "I will pour out my spirit..." (Joel 2:28).

As you prepare for Synod Assembly, I invite you to read my full report (<https://bit.ly/2v3wLoJ>) and I look forward to seeing you all in May!

The Rev. Craig A. Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop

Disciple to Apostle

According to the dictionary and its New Testament usage, a **disciple** is a student of a teacher or philosopher. The twelve followers Jesus gathered around himself were disciples. They listened to his teachings and actions in order to learn. An apostle is someone who is sent, sent on a mission. The disciples began to move from being disciples to being apostles when Jesus sends them on a training mission in Luke 9:1-6. The disciples of Jesus become fully apostles in Acts 2, on Pentecost, when they are commissioned and sent out. They are sent out on a mission to tell the world about Jesus and his message of love and grace.

I was doing some research on a congregation I was visiting recently (in a synod Far, Far, Away) that is giving their pastor resistance for encouraging the congregation to do community outreach and talk about Jesus. The congregation's mission statement and guiding principles are all about being disciples and there is not one word about being apostles sent with a mission.

We are in a critical situation in the church these days. Numbers are dwindling and the church is becoming a closed community. It is important to be disciples of Jesus, but in many places it never grows to being apostles. Knowledge is important and so is practice. For the church to grow, renew, and become vital again we have to do more than be disciples. We have to put our discipleship into practice. We have to become apostles empowered with a mission to the world.

Apostles are on a mission. The mission is to tell and share the love of Jesus in a world that desperately needs it. There are people who live within sight of our church buildings that do not know what the church is all about. They see people going into a building and then leaving in their cars with very little contact or understanding of what happens there.

As summer approaches, what are ways your congregation can make a renewed effort to connect with our neighborhood or surrounding homes? What might be a new and creative way your church can be apostles and be sent into the community to tell the message of Jesus? What could your church do as a demonstration of God's love and grace in your community this summer?

I would love to hear the ideas and results of your being apostles and not just disciples.

Rev. David Sprang
Assistant to the Bishop & Director of Evangelical Mission

Synod Transitions

After prayerful consideration and to best support her family, Pastor Sarah Friesen-Carper, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational and Leadership Excellence, will be moving to part-time as she prepares to transition out of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod on July 31, 2018.

Starting April 23, Pastor Friesen-Carper's office hours will be Monday to Wednesday from 10am-3pm. She will continue to support the Call Process, First Call Theological Education, the Youth Ministry Table including being Synod Day Director for the ELCA Youth Gathering, and the Racial Justice Task Force. She will also preach and preside in congregations twice per month and at the Synod Weekly Eucharist as assigned, and see to other duties as assigned in the Kalamazoo and Greater Grand Rapids Conferences.

Plans are currently in place for an interim assistant to the bishop to take over Pastor Friesen-Carper's responsibilities after her departure in July. There will be more information on this in the May newsletter.

We appreciate everything Pastor Friesen-Carper has done for the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. We will miss her greatly and wish her and her family all the best.

Signs of the Spirit

North/West Lower Michigan Synod Assembly

May 20-22, 2018

Registration is now open for the 2018 Synod Assembly! Visit the Assembly page on the Synod website (<http://mittensynod.org/events/assembly/>) for information on registration, lodging, nomination forms, submission of reports for the synod assembly book, resolutions, and display requests.

We are pleased to welcome the ELCA's Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton. She will preach at the opening Eucharist Sunday evening, address the assembly Monday, and preside at Tuesday's closing Eucharist. Additionally, two town hall-style gatherings midday Monday will offer voting members and guests the opportunity to engage with Presiding Bishop Eaton and Bishop Satterlee in a more informal setting.

Our assembly theme will be explored in greater depth in the April Bishop's Newsletter, but we are excited to share one aspect of our gathering now! **We want to see and hear about the Signs of the Holy Spirit's work in your ministry setting! We encourage every congregation, mission partner, task force, and table create and bring to Assembly a standard-size poster with pictures, art, and words describing how the Holy Spirit is at work in their setting.**

These posters will be displayed around the Assembly meeting room. During lunch sessions on Monday, several of our mission partners will speak briefly, and all will be invited to check out these posters. It is our hope that these "Signs of the Spirit" will inspire and stir up our awareness of the Holy Spirit's work in our midst.

It's not too early to start thinking about what your congregation or ministry organization's poster might look like! Pray for eyes that see the signs of the Spirit's work. Then be creative—engage the artistic and communications skills among your members. Let's surround ourselves and our deliberations at Assembly with Signs of the Spirit!

Coats for the Homeless



During Synod Assembly, the North/West Lower Michigan will be collecting donations to purchase coats from The Empowerment Plan. This Detroit based non-profit organization is focused on permanently elevating families from the generational cycle of homelessness. The coats are water-resistant and can transform into a sleeping bag, or be worn as an over-the-shoulder bag when not in use. The coats are constructed of durable, water resistant Cordura fabric from Carhartt, upcycled automotive insulation from General Motors, and other materials. It costs \$100 to sponsor a coat, which covers the cost of labor, materials, and overhead expenses, plus \$15 for shipping. To learn more about The Empowerment Plan, visit: <http://www.empowermentplan.org/> and plan to stop by the donation table during Synod Assembly.

Synod Finances

as of February 28, 2018 (Note: February 1 begins the new fiscal year)

February Income		Year to Date Income	
Mission Support	\$ 110,558	Mission Support	\$
All Other Income	\$ 5,439	All Other Income	\$
Total Income	\$ 115,997	Total Income	\$
Expenses		Expenses	
Support to ELCA	\$ 55,279	Support to ELCA	\$
All Other Expenses	\$ 69,375	All Other Expenses	\$
Total Expenses	\$ 124,654	Total Expenses	\$
Plus Net Assets Released			
From Restricted Funds	\$ 0		\$
Balance +/-	- \$ 8,657	Balance +/-	\$

Our audited FY2017 Financial Reports will be published in the 2018 Synod Assembly Book and will be available online before the Assembly.

You Matter 2018

We invite all rostered ministers and their families to you us for the annual You Matter Event. This year's event will be held at Potter Park Zoo on July 14.

Registration will be begin May 1!

Synod Boundaries Workshop

All rostered ministers who have not attended a Boundaries Training in three years are strongly encouraged to attend. Lay Leaders may also attend.

Join us April 26! Register: <http://bit.ly/2BYbRtP>

ELCA Draft Social Statement

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod is scheduling hearings to facilitate your input on the ELCA Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice.

We invite you to attend one of the hearings. Learn More: <http://bit.ly/2FzqKFi>

Earth Day Sunday

Earth Day is April 22, 2018. The Environmental Stewardship Task Force (ESTF) of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod encourages congregations to consider uniting with other churches around the country in celebrating Earth Day on April 22. Below are some resources for planning:

www.textweek.com; www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org;
www.mipl.org; www.creationjustice.org;
www.letallcreationpraise.org

Upcoming Events

April

April 19	ELCA Draft Social Statement Hearing	St. Peter, Battle Creek
April 21	Walking Together	St. Luke, Grand Rapids
April 22	ELCA Draft Social Statement Hearing	Advent, Lake Ann
April 26	Synod Boundaries Workshop	St. John, Grayling

May

May 5	ELMM Enrichment Day	Christ United, Dewitt
May 8	ELCA Draft Social Statement Hearing	St. Paul, East Lansing
May 14	ELCA Draft Social Statement Hearing	Ascension, Saginaw
May 20-22	Synod Assembly	Lansing

For information on these events and more, be sure to read our weekly update emails and visit the events section on our website.

Congregations in Transition

Note: We include congregations on the public list when the called pastor or rostered leader completes her or his ministry in the congregation. Thus, congregations in which the pastor has resigned but is still serving are not listed here. We also do not post calls that are accepted until Bishop Satterlee signs the Letter of Call.

Bay Conference	Rev. Emily Olsen, Dean	Kalamazoo Conference	Rev. Kjersten Priddy, Dean
Hope/Marlette (part-time)	Supply Pastors/Awaiting a candidate	Messiah/Constantine	Tom Pederson, Interim/ Awaiting a candidate
Prince of Peace/Rose City	Jeff Bonn, Intentional Interim	St. John's/Baroda	Jim Morgan, Interim/CALL ACCEPTED: Nan Dehnke (I-K). Installation 5/13.
Grace/Vassar (part-time)	Supply Pastors/Awaiting a candidate	Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Doug Ogden, Dean
St. Paul's/Au Gres	Supply Pastors/Exploring Cooperative Ministry with Grace/East Tawas	Samuel/Muskegon	Chris Anderson, interim/ Preparing MSP
St. Timothy/Midland (part-time)	Gerald Ferguson, administrative pastor/ Entering cooperative ministry with Trinity/ Midland/Interviewing	Sunrise Conference	Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean
Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean	Peace/Gaylord	Thomas Mammoser retiring 8/1
University/East Lansing (associate pastor)	Haley Vay Beaman, interim associate pastor/ Congregational vote 4/15	Traverse Conference	Rev. Rosanne Anderson, Dean
St. Stephen/Lansing	Erick Johnson, Interim/ Preparing MSP	St. Paul's/Reed City	Dawn Pooley retiring June 2018/Preparing MSP
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean	Augustana/Tustin	Supply Pastors/ Discerning future
Mamrelund/Kent City	Matt Deames, Intentional Interim/Interviewing		
Christ/Wyoming	Polly Standley, Interim/ Interviewing		